

**Adivasi Lives Matter**

Jun 15, 2019 Adivasi Lives Matter, Environment

[Start Writing](#)[Sign In](#)

## Who Are The Original Guardians Of Our Environment?



By **Ankush Vengurlekar**:

Many countries celebrated World Environment Day on 5th June. This year, per usual, politicians, actors, sportspersons, citizens and organizations celebrated this day with much fervor. However, the environment is not something that can be celebrated only on one day and then forgotten about thereafter. This World Environment Day, we take a look at those people who have made it their everyday mission to care about and stand for the environment.

**Adivasi Lives Matter**

4 Following | 102 Followers

An online platform to challenge the generational neglect of indigenous peoples in India.

#AdivasiLivesMatter

[Follow](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

### Related

**Zomato Ad: Need For Awareness**

Earlier this month, on World Environment Day, food delivery app Zomato released a new advertisement. The two-minute ad featured Aditya



If not for these environmental defenders, the Government and corporations would ensure that we do not have a healthy environment in the coming years. From Kerala to Odisha, from Mumbai to Meghalaya, from Jharkhand to MP, these are the people who have stood against projects that damage the environment, project that grab land, safeguarding not only the environment but also the rights of the forest dwelling and indigenous communities, along with the wildlife and biodiversity that inhabit these environments. According to [this article in the National Geographic](#), less than 5% of the world's population of indigenous people is safeguarding 80% of global biodiversity. Here in India, 200 million forest-dwelling communities which include 105 million Adivasis are the line of defence between environmental conservation and the greedy Government and corporates.

ADVERTISEMENT

When we celebrate World Environment Day, it is imperative to recognize and celebrate the champions of the environment, i.e. the indigenous people or Adivasis/tribals of India.

What Will It Actually Take To 'Reform' Energy?: Part 2

Here's the link to part 1. Focusing on key links in the system is one type of approach to mitigating

What Will It Actually Take To Reform Energy? : Part 1

A 2003 paper computed that around 1,100 megawatts of carbon-free energy had to be added daily to avoid climatic catastrophe.

Celebrating ACTiZENS On The Eve Of World Environment Day

Author name: Aarushi Pawar  
The world is going through a difficult time on multiple fronts – environmental, social, economic, political.

## Trending

01 Why Patrakar Popatlal From Taarak Mehta Is So Problematic

V.Abhishek  
May 23, 2023 Culture-Vulture

02 I Was Harassed, Assaulted, Beaten In Daylight By Locals In Manali

Jahanvi  
May 28, 2023 Gender-Based Violence

03 My Struggle With My Breast

Ruksar Rosy  
May 23, 2023 My Story

04 Why 'Perfection' Pressurises Me And 'Competition' Kills Me

Greeshma  
May 18, 2023 Campus Watch

05 "My First Solo Trip Outside Kerala Was The Finest Decision I Made"

Sharmila N C  
May 16, 2023 My Story

Here are five Adivasi environmental defenders that you must know about –

## 1. Prakash Bhoir, Mumbai



Prakash Bhoir | Image Courtesy- Ankush Vengurlekar for Adivasi Lives Matter

Prakash Bhoir is a fiery Adivasi activist from Aarey, whose consistent initiatives have helped shed light on the condition of Adivasis in this forest. The Aarey forest, located in the Northern suburbs of Mumbai, is the only green cover in the area, and is known for its lush greenery, with tall trees, grasslands and rocky hills. The Aarey land has consistently faced onslaughts from many development projects, and is home to Warli Adivasis who are on the brink of getting displaced from their land, and losing their livelihood.

*“Sometimes the trees come in my dreams. They say, ‘you gave us life, but will you be able to keep us alive?’ Will I be cursed if these trees die?” – Prakash Bhoir*

### DISCOVER MORE OF WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

Campus Stories

Careers

Life and Relationships

Society

Personal Stories

Pop Culture

Politics

Environment

Caste and Identity

Child Rights

Education

Poetry

Gender and Sexuality

Disability Rights

Health and Fitness

Taboos

Books

History

Inspiration

[Home](#) [About](#) [Terms](#) [Community Guide](#)  
[Contact Us](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

*Text: Sabrang India*

## **2. Sukalo Gond, Sonbhadra, UP**

*"We will not beg, we will claim our lands back. It is clear to us that the Government is not supporting us. Our movement will win our rights back, I am sure!"* says Sukalo Gond while tying her cattle as dusk approaches. Sukalo, in her fifties now, is an Adivasi leader from Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. Marching almost rhythmically in a forest rights rally in 2006, her first such experience, Sukalo realised that the possibilities were many and things were bound to change for many like her in the days to come. Little did she know at the time that soon after, she will become one of the leading women activists of the forest struggle of Adivasis in Sonbhadra empowering other women through her own lived experience and life-struggles.



Image Courtesy- Citizens for Justice and Peace

Sukalo is the living witness to a time when there was no awareness among the forest dwellers about their rights and claims on forest land. Atrocities and violence against them was rampant. The police would often barge into their houses and destroy their hutments or physically abuse them with impunity.

Her initiation in the movement to demand the implementation of forest rights in 2006 and the involvement thereafter in various struggles strengthened Sukalo's belief that rights had to be fought for and that the Adivasis will not beg! Sukalo is not only a leader, a treasurer with the All India Union for Forest Working People (AIUFWP), but also takes care of her family, her cattle.

*Text: Sabrang India*

### **3. CK Janu**

*"A total lack of access to and control over any resource. Adivasis are denied access to any land – be it for cultivation, or forestland from which they collect most of the things they need for their survival. The lands we used to cultivate have been taken away from us. The forestlands we used to live on have been usurped by the Forest Department and the moneyed mafia lords. Nowadays, those who own the lands do not give us jobs. There are no jobs in the fields and in the plantations. As a result, Adivasis are pushed into poverty and starvation deaths. We had launched the 'Refugee Camp struggle' in Thiruvananthapuram in August 2001 after more than 20 Adivasis died of starvation. This is the situation everywhere – in Wayanad, Palakkad, Attappady, Idukki. Kasaragod, you name it. Starvation deaths have ceased to*

make news in the state. There are thousands of Adivasis in the grip of several diseases. The Government says Adivasis are dying because they drink arrack and unclean water. But the real cause is poverty, lack of food. How can we eat food if we don't have an inch of land to cultivate?" says CK Janu in an [interview with Down To Earth](#) magazine.



Chekkottu Kariyan (C K) Janu is an Adivasi leader in Kerala. C K Janu was born in Vellamunda village in Wayanad district in 1970. She belongs to the Adiya tribe. Janu served as domestic help from the age of seven. From the age of 12 onwards, she worked as an agricultural labourer on daily wages. Now, she is an active advocate for Adivasi rights in her state.

*Text: Down To Earth*

### **3. Ashish Birulee, Jadugoda**

Ashish Birulee is a young photojournalist and activist from the Ho Adivasi community, living in Jharkhand. He, along with his father and others, have been talking to the Government

about the ill effects of Uranium mining and radiation poisoning in and around Jadugoda, home to India's first Uranium mines.



*"In 2013, I got the chance to exhibit my yearlong work at the International Uranium Film festival (IUFF), Ranchi. My work was appreciated and well received and was further exhibited at the Museum of Art in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2013. I had even more opportunities to exhibit my photos in Canada, Japan and in different regions of India. It has always been my motive to spread more awareness in all possible ways, that whatever suffering we, the Jadugoda people are going through, shouldn't be faced by any other communities and groups. I also know this isn't enough, I still have a lot to experience, learn and a lot to offer to the society as an activist and a photojournalist."*

**Also read:** ['I've Seen My Own Relatives Die Of Radiation': Life As An Activist's Son In Jadugoda](#)

#### **4. Sobha Madan, Nilgiris, TN**

Sobha Madhan is a young Adivasi activist from one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of the Nilgiris. The nomadic Betta Kurumbar Adivasis number around 6,000 today and are present across the Nilgiris region in

Tamil Nadu.

*"I didn't think I'll become like this and all. Till standard X, I studied right here at the Ambalamoola Government Higher Secondary School."*



Image Courtesy- Hindu Businessline, edited and uploaded on Adivasi Lives Matter

Madhan heads the Adivasi Youth Forum (AYF), a collective she set up in 2016 to serve as a voice for the indigenous people of the Nilgiris. She is a rare Adivasi woman in this region who is vociferous about her people's dire situation. She articulates her ideas and demands in fluent Tamil, Malayalam and English, enabling her to reach out to a wide cross-section of people.

Madhan says, *"I'm now working strongly to use the FRA effectively, because that's the only thing we have to get our land back. Our communities have lost many of our ways of living and traditions. This is what we are trying to revive. I believe it's only with empowerment and self-respect that this will happen."* She then adds meaningfully, *"All of this has to come from within our Adivasi community. It*

*shouldn't be imposed from outside. That will never last."*

Text: [The Hindu Businessline](#)

## 5. Jadav Payeng, Assam.



Image Courtesy- The Hindu

Jadav Payeng is one of the most well known tribal conservationists in India. He single-handedly went on to plant saplings and seeds along a dry sandbar by the Brahmaputra in [Assam](#), creating a forest that stands at 550 hectares today on the island of Majuli near Jorhat. He is known as the 'Forest Man of India', a moniker that was conferred on him in April 2012 by Jawaharlal Nehru University.

People travel from across the globe to see his forest that is visited by 120 species of birds, including migratory ones; and elephants, rhinos, and tigers that visit from Kaziranga National Park.

**Also read:** [Watch How One Man Single-Handedly Turned A 1360 Acre Barren Land Into A Forest In Assam](#)

Jadav has a simple solution to the global problem of depleting forest cover: teach our children to love Nature. *"The rest will happen on its own,"* he feels. Although he fears for his

forest's safety, he knows it will survive. The trees he walks past every day talk to him. "They call out to me, saying 'Come, come, now; enough of walking in the sun. Sit under our shade and rest a bit,'" he says.

There are many more environmental defenders working tirelessly to protect the natural resources most of us find so easy to exploit. We salute their tireless efforts and their compassion towards Planet Earth and hope people will take inspiration from them and attempt to save the only planet we have to call home.

*This post has been self-published. Youth Ki Awaaz neither endorses, nor is responsible for the views expressed by the author.*

---

2 Upvotes

ADVERTISEMENT

---

**Respond to this post:**

Start writing...

**More from Adivasi Lives Matter**